

ZEN CENTER LIBRARY

HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER NEWSLETTER

VOL. 2, NO. 1

JUNE 1984

{*} OUR SECOND ISSUE: Although it has been a year since we last published this newsletter our community has not been inactive. Since you last heard from us there have been many changes, some of which are reported here. Beginning with this issue we have decided to simplify production and to publish more often. We hope to reach you every 2 or 3 months. Vol. 2, No. 2 is planned for September.

The Members and Board of Directors

of

HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER

invite you to attend our second annual

" O P E N H O U S E "

Sunday, June 17th

1:30 - 3:30

Refreshments

57 Hartford Street

San Francisco, CA 94114

We look forward to seeing old friends and meeting new ones at this event. As before, it is held in conjunction with the beginning of Lesbian/Gay Pride Week in San Francisco in recognition of our special relationship with this community. And, as always, everyone with a sincere interest in Buddhism is welcome.

Last June we welcomed over 200 visitors. This year, in addition to opening the zendo to visitors and providing refreshments, we have planned a few special activities such as meditation instruction and a memorial service for those who have died of AIDS.

[*] HOUSE PURCHASED: 57 Hartford Street, which houses our zendo, is no longer in danger of being sold on the open real estate market. A group of members and friends have joined together to form a partnership and have purchased the building. Everyone involved in this effort is committed to eventually transferring the property to the HSZC itself, thereby insuring the continuation of Buddhist practice at 57 Hartford and relieving our friends of the responsibilities which they have undertaken in our cause. The change of ownership has necessitated refinancing the existing debt on the property and the incurring of new debts; we also now face the responsibility of maintaining and repairing the building. A fundraising appeal will soon begin to retire the debt and to make repairs. In the meantime we rely on the generosity of friends and members to meet our almost doubled operating costs.

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A TALK AT HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER

by
EKAI KOREMATSU

July 5, 1983

Ekai Korematsu is a Soto Zen priest registered with the Soto headquarters in Japan. His home temple is Jokoji. Born in Japan in 1948, he began sitting at the Berkeley Zendo in 1973 with Sensei Mel Weitsman. He was married to his American wife in 1975 and was ordained by Kobun Chino Otagawa in the spring of 1976. He has since spent 3 years furthering his training at Eihei-ji, Zuio-ji monasteries and at Jokoji temple. He currently leads a small zazen group at Kojin-an in Oakland, California. For more information about the group and its sitting schedule, call (415) 841-6215.

I came to this Zendo to sit with you and hopefully I will have something worthwhile to say. Although I was born and raised in Japan, my actual zazen practice began in this country nine years ago. Prior to my Zen practice I studied and practiced other Buddhist traditions such as Lotus school and Pure Land school. And at one point I was almost determined to become a Jodo Shinshu priest. However, after reading Suzuki-roshi's Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind my sitting practice began. I was so stiff I could not sit even a half nor a quarter lotus position!

How are you?

I am very happy to be sitting with you here. Just sitting is enough for me. Is it enough for you too? I hope so. I wonder how many of you are doing just sitting with confidence.

I would like to talk about meditation. Do you know why we say zazen is not meditation but rather "just sitting"? Webster's Dictionary says meditation means, "to focus one's thoughts on; reflect on or ponder over; to engage in contemplation or reflection." On the other hand zazen is not focusing one's thoughts; to not ponder anything. Zazen is empty or non-thinking mind. Therefore, though I would like to talk about meditation, the practice I've been doing is not meditation, but rather zazen. So I'd better just talk about zazen as this is the practice I'm familiar with.

Actually we say that zazen is not something to talk about but rather it is something to practice. If we could just practice without talking about it - it must be wonderful zen practice. Without words our actions will show what it is. Walking, lying down, sitting and standing are fundamentally what we do throughout our lives. So Zen practice is also nothing but walking, lying down, sitting and standing. In the sitting practice no talking is strictly maintained in the zendo, so it is easier to deepen sitting practice and other forms of zen practice. I would say the recovery of silence in our minds is very important in and of itself as well as giving strength to our zazen. gives strength in zazen. I do not think zazen is relaxation or simply clearing the mind. Rather zazen is the expression of our total being and full awakening. We do not know

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There are so many meditation techniques taught and practiced

in this country. Some are very traditional such as yoga, Tibetan and Theravada. There are also many more new meditation schools and groups such as TM and the martial arts schools. There is also Christian meditation. With so many meditation practices available it is confusing to talk about them and to choose our way of life from among them. Some people feel it is important to understand the deep truth or philosophy beneath the practice, and try to find the most suitable way for themselves. Some people are interested in experience in meditation and try to find their own mind or true mind through these practices. Some people come to meditation to change their lives or to improve themselves through discipline. And some people enjoy the comfort and clear mind in the practice and after meditation. So, many people come to zazen practice with these various ideas in their minds and in practicing they find "good" zazen and "bad" zazen - finding joy and suffering in sitting. But this which we call "good" or "bad" is not zazen, it is rather what we are bringing to the sitting which makes this difference. In zazen DO ZAZEN, not something else. If your intention is pure, everything and everybody will benefit from your sitting. Your true sitting is not the self-centered action of a small mind, rather it is the action of a Buddha's mind, an Ancestor's mind, and a Bodhisattva's mind. This kind of confidence is important from the beginning. If we practice sitting sincerely, for three to ten years, hopefully some kind of confirmation will grow within ourselves.

In the Soto school tradition nothing is secret. The teaching is very honest and direct; at least it is supposed to be! So it becomes very important to practice with a very good teacher from the beginning, as literal transmission is taught from the beginning to the student. A good teacher lives the way of zazen, but of course it is up to the student to take what the teacher has pointed out. If, after sitting over ten years the student is not quite sure about his or her practice, it needs to be examined. Carefully.

The more we sit and deepen zazen over a long time the more our confidence will grow. We will find joy and appreciation in being able to sit.

I really think there is no miracle to this practice. However, it could be a miracle that we have arrived into this world and are practicing zazen from among all the various kinds of practices. What good did I do in my past life to have received zazen? We create our own karma. What I mean by karma is actions. We understand that what we are is the result of past, present and future karma. Because of our own karma we suffer and we enjoy life. And each one is responsible for one's actions through our body, speech and mind. Unfortunately human beings are not so perfect. We make lots of mistakes even though we do not want to. In sitting we make no mistakes. Sitting still like Buddha: no speech, with mouth closed and mind silent, not thinking anything. It is like being free from worldly karma. However even if conscious mind activities are stopped it does not mean there are no thoughts and it does not mean blank mind. Zazen is not closing up our mind, but rather it is naked mind, completely open mind and alive mind. Not excluding anything, we sit in the cross-legged position undisturbed. Nothing to meditate on, so we say just sitting with a straight back. If we expect anything from sitting or bring anything into sitting it is not pure sitting.

Perhaps you are meditating for some reason; if so, this is not Buddha's sitting. This is the difference between meditation

mind in the practice and after meditation. So, many people come to zazen practice with these various ideas in their minds and in practicing they find "good" zazen and "bad" zazen - finding joy and suffering in sitting. But this which we call "good" or "bad" is not zazen, it is rather what we are bringing to the sitting which makes this difference. In zazen DO ZAZEN, not something else. If your intention is pure, everything and everybody will benefit from your sitting. Your true sitting is not the self-centered action of a small mind, rather it is the action of a Buddha's mind, an Ancestor's mind, and a Bodhisattva's mind. This kind of confidence is important from the beginning. If we practice sitting sincerely, for three to ten years, hopefully some kind of confirmation will grow within ourselves.

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Perhaps you are meditating for some reason; if so, this is not Buddha's sitting. This is the difference between meditation and the Soto school's attitude toward zazen. Even if what you want to attain is satori or enlightenment, probably you do not want zazen, but rather you want the Rinzai school method with koans in your sitting, or visualization meditation, or mantra practice. I believe these other meditations may well be more helpful for this. Those of us in the Soto school tradition will just sit like Shakyamuni Buddha, and Bodhidharma, and Dogen Zenji, and also Suzuki-roshi. It could be said that our zazen connects our sitting with the founders' sitting -- no separation. How to actualize and expand our zazen into all our daily activities is our Koan! Dogen Zenji called this Genjokoan.

So let's just sit and stop talking. Thank you and I hope my talk doesn't bother your sitting!

SITTING SCHEDULE

Monday through Friday:

Mornings: 5:00 am Zazen (sitting meditation)
5:40 am Kinhin (walking meditation)
5:50 am Zazen (sitting meditation)
6:30 am Service (chanting and bowing)
6:45 am Soji (cleaning of zendo)
6:50 am Coffee or Tea

Evenings: 6:00 pm Zazen
6:40 pm Service

Tuesdays: In addition to the usual evening schedule time is set aside for orientation of new members and guests at 5:30 pm.

Half-Day Sittings are usually scheduled for one Sunday a month. We begin at 5:00 am and continue until approximately 1:00 pm. The program includes 7 or 8 periods of zazen, breakfast, work period and service. Check the zendo bulletin board or call for more details.

Our spiritual adviser, Issan Dorsey, is a zen monk in residence at the San Francisco Zen Center. If you would like to meet with him, you may make an appointment by calling him at 863-3136 or by speaking to him after service on Tuesday morning or evening.

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Hartford Street Zen Center is operated and supported by our community. While we are assisted in this effort by the San Francisco Zen Center, with which we are organizationally affiliated, our primary source of support is from our members.

The 3 forms of membership currently available are:

PRACTICING MEMBER: a person who participates regularly in our schedule and activities. Suggested monthly pledge is \$25.

AFFILIATE MEMBER: For those who are already members of an affiliate Zen group, but wish to be considered a member of HSZC as well. Suggested monthly pledge is \$7.50.

SUPPORTING MEMBER: a person who wishes to support our practice and activities, but does not participate in them regularly. Suggested monthly pledge is \$10.

FRIENDS: a contribution in any amount will be appreciated.

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE AND SHOULD
BE MADE PAYABLE TO HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER

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